

Matter of definition: Who's a 'Communist'?



WASHINGTON—With astonishing speed, the Reagan administration has plummeted from its victory in the Philippines—a triumph of level-headed, bipartisan statesmanship—to the cheapest kind of political thuggery in its effort to ship \$100 million to guerrillas in Nicaragua.

We have Patrick Buchanan, the White House director of communications, to thank for this sudden degeneration. In an article in The Washington Post this week, Buchanan wrote:

"By cutting arms shipments to Nicaragua's freedom fighters, by tying the President's hands with the Boland amendment, the national Democratic Party has now become, with Moscow, co-guarantor of the Brezhnev doctrine in Central America."

"Whose side are you on?" Buchanan asks. "With the vote on contra aid, the Democratic Party will reveal whether it stands with Ronald Reagan and the resistance—or (Nicaraguan leader) Daniel Ortega and the Communists."

There is your choice, fellow Americans. You are either with Reagan on this specific, complex issue—or you are a Communist. Maybe a comsymp. Or a dupe. I don't believe former Sen. Joseph McCarthy ever presented the choice so starkly, but McCarthy was a man of measured words and thoughtful temperament compared to Buchanan.

"This is not McCarthyism," says Christopher Matthews, an aide to House Speaker Tip O'Neill. "It's Charlie McCarthyism. The little guy is doing all the talking. If it's true, why isn't the Big Guy saying it?"

Granted, the Sandinista government in Nicaragua includes rascals and incompetents who enrich themselves while oppressing, intimidating and, on occasion, murdering their own populace, to the extent that thousands are fleeing—some to neighboring countries, some to join the guerrilla movement.

The current problem for America is how best to defuse this threat. The Reagan administration's answer is to

throw money at it. The current proposal would grant \$30 million in humanitarian aid and \$70 million in weapons to . . .

To whom? This is the great, unanswered question. The "contra" guerrillas are a feuding, motley group that ranges from genuine, democratic Nicaraguan patriots to the lowest form of goons and criminals. They have a name, the United Nicaraguan Opposition, but not much else.

Sad to say, the goons and criminals have, so far, run the show. The Reagan administration has been able to present moderate Nicaraguan civilians—Arturo Cruz, Adolfo Calero and Alfonso Robelo—as the leaders of the anti-Sandinista coalition. But the forces in the field are under the control of former officers of the hated National Guard of ousted dictator Anastasio Somoza.

Robert Leiken, a specialist on Central America who has grown disenchanted with the Sandinistas, nevertheless writes in the current New York Review of Books that the leadership of the contras is not quite the idealistic group of freedom-fighters described by President Reagan.

Rather, he says, "they form a cabal that is closely linked to a shadowy network of expropriated landowners, bankers, industrialists and former associates of Somoza."

While Reagan innocently talks about arming the "contras" so that they can force the Sandinistas to honor the original goals of the anti-Somoza revolution, he in fact proposes giving \$100 million to Somoza allies seeking to overturn the revolution.

Among those who have opposed this course of action is John McMahon, deputy director and highest-ranking professional at the Central Intelligence Agency. Is he, too, to be denounced by Patrick Buchanan as a "co-guarantor of the Brezhnev doctrine"? Too late. McMahon announced this week that he is resigning.

One of the lessons taught us by Ferdinand Marcos as he left the Philippines is that bipartisanship in foreign policy pays off in U.S. foreign policy. Another is that some people who take money from us on the pretense that they are fighting communism tend to have extremely well-dressed wives.

DO YOU KNOW where this \$100 million will wind up? Will it be in the hands of Nicaraguan patriots like Eden Pastora, struggling through the mud to fight for democracy—or in the Miami bank accounts of country-club anti-Communists?

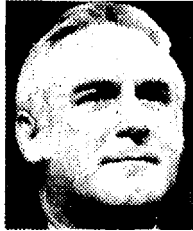
Watch how you answer that. Guess wrong, and Buchanan might call you a Communist.

Career intelligence officer named as deputy CIA chief

Washington

A President Reagan has named career intelligence officer Robert M. Gates as the Central Intelligence Agency's deputy director, replacing John McMahon, who resigned "for personal reasons."

Mr. McMahon's resignation, announced by the White House late Tuesday, was met with approval by two conservative lobbying groups that blame him for holding up supplies of better weaponry to the anticommunist resistance in Afghanistan.



McMahon

The Washington Post quoted sources as saying McMahon had conflicts with the Reagan administration over escalating US covert operations in the third world.

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Enter Gates as the No. 2 spy

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A WASHINGTON—President Reagan has named career intelligence officer Robert Gates as the nation's No. 2 spy to replace Deputy CIA Director John McMahon, who resigned for "personal reasons" after 34 years in the intelligence service.

McMahon's resignation, announced by the White

House Tuesday, was hailed by two conservative lobbying groups. The Washington Post yesterday said the groups, Free the Eagle and the Federation for American-Afghan Action, had mounted nationwide letter-writing campaigns calling for McMahon's removal.

The two groups blamed him for holding up supplies of more effective weapons, including anti-aircraft mis-

siles, to the anti-Communist resistance in Afghanistan, The Post reported.

McMahon, 56, gave no explanation for his resignation other than to say in a letter to Reagan that he had "reached a stage where I should move on."

The White House statement cited "personal reasons" for the deputy's departure, which is to be effective March 29.